

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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R 271045Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0297

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 8672

EXDIS

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS XX

SUBJ: EXTENT OF POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL IN WORLD

REF: USUN 4008

1. SUMMARY: EBAN HAS EXPRESSED VIEW TO ME THAT ISRAEL'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED BY THIS WAR: WORLD SAW THAT ISRAEL DID NOT START IT AND THAT ARABS FOREWENT POLITICAL OPTION IN DOING SO. OUR IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, IS THAT ISRAEL'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION HAS BEEN STEADILY DETERIORATING SINCE 1967 AND 1973 WAR HAS NOT SLOWED THIS DOWN. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER REASONS FOR DETERIORATION IN SPECIFIC INSTANCES, THERE SEEMS LITTLE DOUBT THAT ISRAEL'S POSTURE ON TERRITORIAL ISSUE HAS BEEN KEY CONTRIBUTING FACTOR. THERE IS DISINCLINATION ABROAD TO ACCEPT THESIS THAT MILITARILY POWERFUL COUNTRY LIKE ISRAEL NEEDS LARGE TERRITORIAL BUFFER FOR ITS SECURITY, AND MANY WILL PROBABLY NOT AGREE WITH CURRENT ISRAELI ARGUMENT THAT 1973 WAR IS PROOF OF THIS THESIS. ALTHOUGH I PERSONALLY SO VIEW IT. THUS, IF ISRAELI ATTITUDE ON TERRITORY SHOULD HARDEN IN POSTWAR PERIOD, ISRAEL'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION IS LIKELY TO DETERIORATE FURTHER. THIS WOULD HAVE NEGATIVE EFFECT IN TURN ON ATTITUDES OF PARTIES TO ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE AND ON US-ISRAELI RELATIONS, AND I BELIEVE THEREFORE IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO SEEK TO PREVENT HARDENING OF AT LEAST PUBLIC POSTURE OF GOI ON TERRITORIAL ISSE. END SUMMARY.

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2. IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH ME EBAN TOUCHED ON QUESTION OF WORLD RECOGNITION THAT ISRAEL HAD NOT STARTED LATEST WAR AND THAT ARABS' ASSERTION WAS FALSE THAT THEY HAD NO RECOURSE BUT MILITARY MEANS TO PURSUE THEIR MID EAST OBJECTIVES, HAVING

EXHAUSTED POLITICAL MEANS. HE MENTIONED-- AS IF TO IMPLY WHOLE WORLD KNEW IT-- THAT EGYPT AND SYRIA HAD BEEN AWARE OF ISRAEL'S AGREEMENT LAST MONTH WITH US TO ENTER INTO SERIOUS DISCUSSIONS IN NOVEMBER, AS SOON AS ISRAELI ELECTION WAS OUT OF WAY, ABOUT HOW TO START A PROCESS WHICH COULD LEAD TO MID EAST ACCOMMODATION (REFTEL).

3. I DID NOT CONSIDER THIS TO BE SUITABLE OCCASION TO PURSUE MATTER WITH EBAN IN ORDER TO PROBE EXTENT OF HIS CONVICTION ON SUBJECT:. BUT I RECEIVED IMPRESSION EBAN BELIEVED THAT ISRAEL'S INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL POSITION HAD BECOME CONSIDERABLY STRONGER BECAUSE ISRAEL HAD MADE CERTAIN NO ONE COULD ACCUSE ISRAEL OF HAVING STARTED WAR AND BECAUSE ARABS HAD FOREGONE CONCRETE POLITICAL OPTION IN RESORTING TO FORCE.

4. FROM WHAT INDICATIONS WE HAVE HERE, ISRAEL'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION HAS IN FACT BEEN DETERIORATING. FROM END OF 1972 UNTIL START OF WAR, SEVEN AFRICAN COUNTRIES PLUS CUBA BROKE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. DURING WAR, ELEVEN MORE AFRICAN COUNTRIES (INCLUDING ETHIOPIA OCT 23, NIGERIA OCT 25, AND GAMBIA OCT 26) DID SO. THIS MEANS A TOTAL OF 27 NATIONS SINCE JUNE 1967 WAR HAVE SEVERED TIES. FURTHERMORE, BEHAVIOR OF WEST EUROPEANS DURING WAR, FOR WHATEVER REASONS, LEAVES US WITH IMPRESSION THAT ONLY NETHERLANDS STOOD SOLIDLY WITH ISRAEL. ISRAELIS OF COURSE ARE PAINFULLY AWARE OF EROSION OF THEIR POSITION IN AFRICA AND WEAKINING OF THEIR POSITION IN EUROPE. BUT EBAN'S REMARK TO ME LEADS ONE TO WONDER WHETHER GOI HAS MADE REALISTIC TALLY OF ITS POSITION GLOBALLY.

5. ONE OF GROUNDS CITED EVEN AS EARLY AS JUNE 1967, WHEN SOVIET BLOC AND GUINEA BROKE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL AT END OF SIX DAY WAR, WAS OSTENSIBLE JUSTICE OF DEMAND OF ARAB STATES NEIGHBORING ISRAEL FOR RESPECT OF THEIR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. ISRAEL'S ALLEGED REFUSAL TO WITHDRAW FROM OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES HAS BECOME KEY GROUNDS CITED BY STATES WHICH HAVE SEVERED TIES WITH ISRAEL IN 1972-1973. IN ALL THESE CYNICAL
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RUPTURES THERE WERE OF COURSE UNSTATED REASONS WHY COUNTRIES CONCERNED BROKE TIES WHICH WERE NOT DIRECTLY CONNECTED WITH RELATIVE POLITICAL POSITIONS OF PARTIES TO MID EAST DISPUTE. SOME OF SEVERING GOVTS HAVE CONTINUED PRIVATELY TO ACKNOWLEDGE JUSTICE OF ISRAEL'S DEMAND THAT NEGOTIATIONS PRECEDE ISRAELI COMMITMENT ON EXTENT OF WITHDRAWAL. NEVERTHELESS, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT WORLD OVER PAST SIX AND A HALF YEARS HAS COME SERIOUSLY TO QUESTION ISRAELI TERRITORIAL INTENTIONS WHICH LIE BEHIND GOI DEMAND FOR NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE WITHDRAWAL COMMITMENT, AND THAT THIS QUESTIONING HAS BEEN MAJOR FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO DETERIORATION OF ISRAEL'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION.

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7. AS SEEN FROM TEL AVIV VANTAGE POINT, ISRAELI POSITION ON NEGOTIATIONS AND WITHDRAWAL HAS BEEN LOSING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT BECAUSE OF (A) GROWING BELIEF ABROAD THAT ISRAEL WILL INSIST IN ANY NEGOTIATIONS ON ACQUISITION OF LARGE PIECES OF TERRITORY AND (B) GROWING REJECTION ABROAD OF DEMANDS PERCEIVED FOR GOI DESIRE FOR TERRITORY. WE SEE NO SIGNS THAT ISRAELI HISTORICAL ATTACHMENT TO PARTS OF WEST BANK IS VIEWED ABROAD WITH ANY SYMPATHY. AS FOR ISRAEL'S SECURITY PROBLEMS, ISRAEL'S IMAGE SINCE 1967 HAS BEEN THAT OF THE MOST POWERFUL NATIONAL MILITARILY IN NEAR EAST--PRESUMABLY AN IMAGE SHAKEN A LITTLE BUT NOT SERIOUSLY DAMAGED BY LATEST WAR-- AND IT SEEMS THAT PROFOUND SKEPTICISM HAS EMERGED ABROAD ABOUT ISRAEL'S NEED FOR TERRITORY AS SECURITY BUFFER. CURRENT TENDENCY IN ISRAEL IS TO ARGUE THAT 1973 WAR PROVES VALUE OF BUFFER WITH WHICH I PERSONALLY AGREE, GIVEN NATURE OF ARAB SURPRISE ATTACK. THIS MAY MEET COUNTER-ARGUMENT ABROAD TO EFFECT THAT 1973 WAR HAS ACTUALLY SHOWED THAT TERRITORIAL BUFFER OFFERS ISRAEL LITTLE REAL SECURITY.

8. IN ANY EVENT, IF GOI POSITION ON TERRITORIAL ISSUE SHOULD HARDEN IN WAKE OF SUDDEN WAR, WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF ISRAEL'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION. SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD ENHANCE SIEGE MENTALITY INSIDE ISRAEL, AND IT WOULD REENFORCE ARAB CONVICTIONS ABOUT NON-LEGITIMACY OF STATE OF ISRAEL. IT WOULD ALSO MAKE ISRAEL EVEN MORE DEPENDENT ON US, WHICH WOULD BE UNHEALTHY DEVELOPMENT IN US-
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ISRAELI RELATIONS FROM BOTH PARTIES' POINT OF VIEW.

9. IN SHORT, IT IS NOT IN OUR INTEREST TO LET THIS HAPPEN. DESIRE TO PREVENT FURTHER DETERIORATION IN ISRAEL'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION IS THUS STILL ONE MORE REASON FOR US TO WORK HARD TO

PREVENT HARDENING OF AT LEAST PUBLIC GOI ATTITUDE TOWARD
TERRITORIAL ISSUE IN DAYS AHEAD.

10. THIS MAY ALREADY HAVE BEEN SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION BETWEEN
US AND ISRAEL OF WHICH I HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE. BUT
IN CASE IT HAS NOT, I FELT THIS SHOULD BE URGENTLY
BROUGHT TO DEPT'S ATTENTION.
KEATING

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